



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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RED SNAPPER COMMERCIAL FISHERY IN GULF OF MEXICO FEDERAL WATERS WILL OPEN AT NOON, DECEMBER 1, 2003, AND CLOSE AT NOON, DECEMBER 7, 2003

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) announces that the commercial fishery for red snapper in Gulf of Mexico federal waters will open at noon, local time, on December 1, 2003, and close at noon, local time, on December 7, 2003. The commercial red snapper fishing season will then remain closed until noon, local time, on February 1, 2004. The 2003 Gulf of Mexico commercial red snapper quota is 4.65-million pounds. The commercial fishing season is divided into spring and fall seasons. The spring season began at noon, local time, on February 1, 2003, with 3.10 million pounds available, and the fall season began at noon, local time, on October 1, with the remainder of the annual quota available. During the spring and fall seasons, fishing will be allowed during the first 10 days of each month until the quota is caught. Preliminary landings for the 2003 spring season indicated that 3,021,135 pounds of red snapper were landed. Therefore, a total of 1,628,865 pounds remained in the quota for the fall season which began October 1, 2003. Preliminary landings for October 1-10, 2003, totaled

511,549 pounds (revised from 451,220), and November 1-10, 2003, totaled 676,694 pounds for a total of 1,188,243 pounds of red snapper landed during the period. Therefore, a total of 440,622 pounds are available for the December 2003 commercial opening.

The operator of a vessel with a valid reef fish permit and a Class 1 or Class 2 red snapper license having red snapper aboard must have landed and sold such red snapper before noon, local time, on December 7, 2003. The minimum size limit for the commercial fishery is 15 inches total length.

This and other news releases are available on the SERO homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>.

NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.